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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI (TROBERTS), NP/ECC (TGROEN)  
AMMAN FOR J. IRVINE  
ROTTERDAM FOR M. BEE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PARM](#) [ETTC](#) [EWWT](#) [KSTC](#) [ETRD](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: U.S. COAST GUARD ENGAGES OMANI GOVERNMENT ON ISPS  
COMPLIANCE

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SUMMARY  
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1. (U) A representative of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) International Port Security Program initiated a dialogue with the government of Oman on efforts to comply with the International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Code. The visit revealed important developments in Omani maritime security, including the government's desire to create a unified command center and authority for maritime security, an upgrade of closed-circuit televisions for ports Salalah and Sultan Qaboos, and developing a coastal surveillance network with an Automatic Identification System (AIS) and radar detection. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications has also signed a \$9 million contract to purchase five container scanners for placement at critical border crossings with Yemen and the United Arab Emirates. End Summary.

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OMAN ISPS COMPLIANCE  
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3. (U) Lieutenant Commander Mike Bee, the U.S. Coast Guard's Regional Liaison Officer (RLO) for International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Code compliance, conducted an orientation visit to Oman May 29-June 1, 2005 to learn about the Sultanate's ISPS Code implementation, promote bilateral cooperation, and exchange ideas and best practices in maritime security. LCDR Bee met with key government and industry officials responsible for ISPS implementation and gained an initial insight into Oman's approach to ISPS and maritime security challenges.

4. (SBU) Prior to Oman's ratification of the ISPS Code, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MTC) contracted U.K.-based security specialist Hudson-Trident to perform port facility security assessments and draft security plans for each of Oman's eight international trade port facilities. Port facility security plans were approved for all ports by May 30, 2004, and were immediately followed by Oman's official ratification of the ISPS code on June 12, 2004 (Royal Decree 63/2004).

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ISPS ORGANIZATION  
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5. (U) In meetings with the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, lead Omani ISPS coordinator Mohamed bin Aziz al-Abdisalam, Director of Maritime Affairs, provided a brief synopsis of Hudson-Trident's recommendations and the overall ISPS organization and plans for implementation in Oman.

6. (SBU) Although general maritime security currently falls under the supervision of the MTC, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) is the primary operational agency, with the ROP Coast Guard providing land and waterside security inside port boundaries and up to 12 nautical miles out to sea.

7. (SBU) In a technical oversight committee currently chaired by the Director of Maritime Affairs, representatives from the ROP Coast Guard and Customs, the Ministry of Defense, relevant port authorities, and the MTC meet regularly to discuss ISPS implementation at each of Oman's international trade ports.

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MARITIME SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS  
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8. (SBU) At Port Sultan Qaboos (Muscat), LCDR Bee met with ROP Coast Guard Commander Colonel Ali Saleh al-Balushi, Deputy Commander Lieutenant Colonel Badr al-Zadjali, and Port Sultan Qaboos Executive President Saud al-Nahari. The officials welcomed the opportunity to discuss ISPS implementation at Omani ports and shared information on planned developments in maritime security.

## Physical Security Upgrades

19. (SBU) Although ports Sultan Qaboos and Salalah both meet the government of Oman's threshold for ISPS compliance, officials at the MTC confirmed that fencing around restricted access areas, construction of new controlled-access gates, and installation of closed-circuit televisions are underway. Al-Nahari also said that in light of Muscat's growing popularity as a tourist destination for passenger ships, construction will begin on a 6th berth for a separate passenger cruise terminal at Port Sultan Qaboos. (Note: Oman received the world's largest passenger ship, the Queen Elizabeth II, earlier this year, and boasted hosting almost 10,000 ship-to-shore passengers in 2004. End Note.)

## Organization

10. (SBU) The ISPS implementation committee, spurred by Hudson-Trident's recommendation, has sent two progressive policy and program recommendations to the Sultan for consideration and funding. One recommendation includes creating a unified command center and authority for a maritime security agency that would report directly to the Sultan and would incorporate the activities of the ROP Coast Guard, Maritime Affairs, and Navy. The other recommendation is to develop a coastal surveillance network with an Automatic Identification System (AIS) and radar detection to create a more complete offshore maritime picture, ultimately requiring small fishing vessels and dhows to carry a location transponder onboard. Although both recommendations are under consideration, officials at the MTC believe it is only a matter of time before the recommendations come into effect.

11. (SBU) In additional efforts to enhance security and protection along Oman's lengthy borders, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications recently signed a \$9 million contract to purchase five container scanners. According to one official at the MTC, the scanners will be placed along critical border-crossings with Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, as well as at Port Sultan Qaboos. A planned second-phase expansion is expected to place scanners at the import/export gates at Ports Salalah and Sohar.

## COMMENT

12. (SBU) LCDR Bee was impressed with the government's systematic and thorough approach to ISPS implementation. However, although the ports appear to have good security practices in place, and present a low risk to U.S. maritime security, LCDR Bee proposed a follow-up visit in the fall to monitor physical security upgrades underway at Port Sultan Qaboos, as well as to visit the burgeoning Port Sohar.

13. (U) LCDR Bee cleared this cable.  
BALTIMORE